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'God is love': The Key to the Pontificate of Benedict XVI

~ by *Andrea Tornielli, Vatican News*

Not since 1417 has the death of a (former) Pope not brought with it the end of a pontificate. Saturday's death of Benedict XVI, born Joseph Ratzinger, comes nearly 10 years after he announced his unexpected resignation on February 11, 2013.

Never before in the Church's two-thousand-year history had a Pope resigned because he felt physically inadequate to bear the weight of the papal office. In a response given to journalist Peter Seewald three years earlier, Benedict had in some way anticipated it: "If a Pope clearly realizes that he is no longer physically, psychologically, and spiritually capable of handling the duties of his office, then he has a right and, under some circumstances, also an obligation to resign."

Even though the conclusion of his reign came before the end of his life, creating a historic precedent of enormous magnitude, it would truly be unbecoming to remember Benedict XVI for this alone.



After the death of John Paul II, the conclave held in 2005 elected Ratzinger – already an old man of 78 years – to succeed him in less than 24 hours. Ratzinger was universally esteemed and respected, even by his adversaries.

From the loggia of Saint Peter's Basilica, Benedict XVI presented himself as "a humble worker in the vineyard of the Lord". He wanted to "listen, together with the whole Church, to the word and the will of the Lord.

Pope Benedict continually spoke of the "joy of being Christian". He dedicated his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, to the love of God. "Being Christian", he wrote, "is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person."

To read the entire account, please click [here](#)

Pope Francis extols Benedict XVI as Pastor in Historic Two-Pope Vatican Funeral

~by Christopher White, National Catholic Reporter

In one of the rarest scenes in two millennia of Catholic Church history, today, Pope Francis presided over the funeral Mass of his predecessor, the late Pope Benedict XVI, and offered a send-off to someone he extolled as a pastor who “spread and testified” to the Gospel for his entire life.

During a brief, seven-minute homily to a crowd of thousands gathered during a cool, foggy morning in St. Peter’s Square, Francis reflected on the life of Christ, marked by “hands of forgiveness and compassion, healing and mercy, anointing and blessing,” seemingly drawing a parallel to the same devotion in which Benedict served the church.



In the years since Benedict’s resignation, Francis has referred to his predecessor as a "[grandfather of all grandfathers](#)" and often praised the wisdom Benedict offered as a retired pope living inside the Vatican walls.

Tens of thousands were present in St. Peter’s Square to witness an occasion that historians say has very little precedent. Before Benedict, the last pope to resign had been

Gregory XII, who was forced to step down in 1415 to end a schism. The last pope to resign voluntarily had been Celestine V in 1294.

German Cardinal Walter Kasper was among those in St. Peter’s. “This resignation wasn’t a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength, a greatness because he saw that he was no longer up to the challenges of being pope,” said Kasper.

He added that Benedict’s resignation provided “a more human vision to the papacy, that the pope is a man and is dependent on his physical and mental strengths.”

As Francis offered his final tribute to his predecessor at the conclusion of his homily, the Pope called Benedict a “faithful friend” of God and prayed, “May your joy be complete as you hear his voice, now and forever.” ~ *Joshua McElwee contributed to this report*

To read the complete account, please click [here](#)

MSCs on Mission – True Missionaries Faithful to God’s Call

After long-standing service at Cabrini Health, Australia and the National Shrine of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, Chicago, respectively, Sr. Sharon Casey, MSC and Sr. Bridget Zanin, MSC are now beginning new ministries.

Sr. Sharon Casey, MSC

The following are remarks that Sr. Sharon Casey, MSC shared with the Cabrini Health community:

Greetings during this Advent, Christmas and Hanukkah season!



Sr. Sharon Casey, MSC delivers a farewell message to the staff members of Cabrini Health, Australia, having served there for 13 years.

I’d like to say thank you for your warm welcome to me in 2009 upon my arrival here at a medical facility across the earth! It definitely was a daunting experience. However, your excitement and demonstration of the Cabrinian values which I sensed immediately was heartening.

Your encouragement and support bolstered my determination to fulfil the mission God called me to do in Melbourne.

During these years, a message arose within me, saying, ‘remember who you are’. It was clear, stirring and helped me often to re-ground myself. This message made me pause amid the dizzying pace and consider my roots, beliefs, manner of being and interacting. It gave me the opportunity to remember those upon whose shoulders I stand.

This message was a gift from God. I often remind myself with the grace of God, of who I am, where I’ve come from, and the values that shaped me. These moments, made me conscious of the strong pull from society to become truly self-centered.

I encourage you to remember who you are as a member of the Cabrinian community whether you’ve been here for 30 years or three months. I encourage you to remember the commitment that you made to be faithful to our Ethic of Care when you came here.

When social media and society lure you into believing in acting in another way, I encourage you to go and spend some time by the sculpture that was designed and made over a number of years due to the COVID pandemic.



The sculpture VIGIL – The Heart of Cabrini is a memorial of thanks to the sisters who first came here, carrying the spirit of Mother Cabrini and **each of you who have made Cabrini what it has become thus far.**

When you need encouragement, consider going out and sitting by this sculpture, helping you remember who you are.

On behalf of all my Sisters of the Sacred Heart throughout the world and our lay collaborators and partners, I thank you for your efforts to work according to the Cabrinian values, Ethic of Care, and legacy.

~ submitted by Julie Fleming, Cabrini Health

Sr Sharon Casey, MSC – December 2022 To view a video of Sr. Sharon’s sharing her message: <https://vimeo.com/780550489/e1cd1d118c>

Sr. Bridget Zanin, MSC

Sister Bridget Zanin, MSC, joined the Cabrini University community on Tuesday, November 29. She has served as a Missionary Sister of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (MSC) since 1962. As a teenager in Brazil, she was called on a spiritual path that led her from her home to the United States Midwest and eventually Radnor, PA. Get to know Sister Bridget through the Q&A below. Answers have been edited for clarity and brevity. ~ submitted by Matt Nestor, Cabrini University



What are your first impressions since arriving here at Cabrini University?

Sister Bridget: The campus is beautiful. I feel a little bit isolated because I’m so used to living in a city where you step out and can go anywhere and do anything. Here, you need a car.

Which city were you in before you arrived here?

SB: Chicago. I was the Director of the National Shrine of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini in Chicago. I was at the Shrine for 10 years. And before that, I was in the city of Des Plaines [Illinois]. I was working as a chaplain at the Holy Family Hospital. And, before that I worked at Mercy Family Hospital in Chicago.

What kinds of service did you do there and elsewhere?

SB: My first profession was as a nurse. I worked as an ICU nurse in medical/surgical. It was kind of getting heavier and heavier, so I went in to chaplaincy so I could talk to patients and their families. Having the nursing background, being a chaplain I think was a blessing for me, because I could understand the patient's diagnosis—what they were going through. I could talk to them not as a nurse, but as a chaplain.

You grew up in Brazil, correct?

SB: Yes, I was born in Brazil. My grandparents migrated from Venice, Italy to Brazil where they worked very hard to get themselves through a hard time. They moved there during the Second World War, when people were moving out to look for a better life. So, they struggled a lot. But, I see now their struggles were not in vain, because I see now my family are in good positions. I have a judge, two lawyers, and a doctor in the family.

How did you choose religious life?

SB: I always felt a call. I used to go and pray every day. I had two other friends and they wanted to go [to the convent]. Two months later, my dad rented a car and took us to the convent. I was only 15. Can you imagine? Then, we did our profession and took our vows. And, I was missioned to the United States.

Obviously, you are a Missionary Sister of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, an order founded by Mother Cabrini. What does it mean to you to come here to Cabrini University, the only Cabrinian University in the world?

SB: I think it's very special. And, the people who I have met so far, they're so nice. I had a passion for the [Shrine] that I was at, and seeing that the people here have the same values and are part of the Cabrini family, has encouraged me to keep on giving and do whatever I can.

What attracted you to the MSCs?

SB: It was their simplicity and their faith. I like simplicity. I knew nothing about Mother Cabrini but they gave us books to read. And, the more I read, I saw she had this big devotion to the Sacred Heart. She kept saying the Sacred Heart is the fountain of all virtues.

**What do you hope to accomplish here at Cabrini, and what do you hope to send students out in the world with?**

SB: If I can make a difference in someone's life, this life will go on to make a difference in the world. I feel that we all have a mission. Sometimes, people think they have to have a vocation to do the mission. No, you don't. Life is an attitude. So, we can have a positive attitude—a faith attitude. I have my certificate in spiritual direction and I'm also a chaplain. And, I was a nurse. I am hoping to bring these skills to my present mission, everywhere I go and in everything that I do. I hope I can make a difference in campus life. To read the full interview with Sr. Bridget, please click [here](#) ~ interview by Matt Nestor, Cabrini University website

Christmas Brings Celebrations

It was a very busy Christmas season at Cabrini Immigrant Services (CIS), Dobbs Ferry, NY. We celebrated the completion of our third Nutrition Program. The students attended an 8 week program, presented by Lucy Diaz, a Nutrition Program Educator with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Westchester County. The course, 'Expanded Food and Nutrition



The participants in the Nutrition Program proudly display their Certificates of Completion.

Education Program', taught the participants about how to read and understand labels on different food and drink items, food safety, reducing salt and sugar intake, etc. We celebrated with our students who completed the course. In addition to the students receiving certificates, CIS was also presented with a certificate thanking us for working as partners to bring the nutrition program to the Westchester Community.

We had a special Christmas Dinner for several of our Moms. We enjoyed so many homemade dishes from different countries. The Moms had a Secret Santa. Each person got up and said some beautiful words about the person for whom "Santa" brought a gift. The evening also included some singing and dancing! The Moms enjoyed having some special time together.



The Cabrini Moms gathered for a Christmas dinner with an international flair. Everyone enjoyed tasting the delicious dishes from a variety of countries.



These ladies, members of the Cabrini Knitting Group, also gathered to celebrate the season with a festive dinner.

Everyone enjoyed the conversations, especially about all the different items that they have knitted over the past months. The group loves being together and so they decided not to take a Christmas break. They will be returning to CIS next Wednesday.

~ submitted by Lorraine Campanelli, Director, CIS, Dobbs Ferry

Our Cabrini Knitting Group also celebrated the holidays. Special dishes from Guatemala, El Salvador, Mexico and Chile were shared. The food was delicious.



A Warm Welcome Back for Cabrini Friends



How delightful it was to welcome two longtime friends of the Missionary Sisters to the MSC Cottage on the campus of Cabrini University. While in Philadelphia for conferences this week, Michelle Sherman, 2nd I., a former Cabrini Mission Corps missionary, and her husband, Dr. Nick Rademacher, a former professor at Cabrini University stopped by for a visit. Sr. Christine Marie Baltas, MSC (I.) and Sr. Bridget Zanin, MSC (2nd r.) were there to greet them. Michelle is now working for Pax Christi USA and Nick is a Professor in the Religious Studies Department of the University of Dayton. Their visit was a happy way to begin the new year.

Prayer Requests

Cabrini University alumna

A graduate of Cabrini University has asked for the prayers of the Missionary Sisters for guidance and direction with a major life decision. She asks that the Sisters intercede with Mother Cabrini to guide her path.

With Grateful Hearts

Thank you from JoAnn Seaman and Family

JoAnn Seaman, the Director of Development at the Mother Cabrini Shrine in Golden, CO, wishes to thank the Missionary Sisters and the Cabrinian Community for their outpouring of support for her and her daughters Molly and Hannah upon the passing of JoAnn's husband, Tim, in December. She and the girls "have been overwhelmed and uplifted by the love, support and prayers by our Cabrini Family. The cards, calls, emails, texts, Masses, etc., have meant so much."



Let us continue to keep Joann, Molly, Hannah and their family in our prayers in a special way in the weeks and months to come.

In Loving Memory

Pope Benedict XVI

Let us pray. O God, who in your wondrous providence chose your servant Benedict to preside over your Church, grant, we pray, that, having served as the Vicar of your Son on earth, he may be welcomed by him into eternal glory. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. Amen. ~ *This collect prayer was offered in Latin at the funeral Mass for Pope Benedict.*